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HONG KONG/PRC/UK: A NEW GAME

China's Hong Kong affairs chief Lu Ping has accused Governor Chris Patten of refusing to cooperate and violating prior agreements in trying to broaden Hong Kong democracy.

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After Patten's October 20-23 trip to Beijing to explain proposed political changes, Lu Ping launched a fierce attack on the program, threatening after 1997 to replace the Hong Kong government, including the Legislative Council (Legco) and civil servants, if Patten went ahead on his own.

Patten's plan, to succeed, requires the support of a more assertive Legco, but this is by no means guaranteed because the balance in Legco rests with pro-business conservatives fearful of antagonizing Beijing.

Pursuant to a UK-PRC arrangement, legislators elected to four-year terms in 1995 will ride a "through train" and become the first legislators of the PRC's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The PRC reserves the right to disqualify legislators from post-1997 service, however. Both the PRC and Hong Kong's democratic activists view the 1995 elections as crucial in determining just how tame or autonomous Hong Kong will be after 1997.

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China's concerns

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